



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Observes World AIDS Day *Department of Health Urges Testing for At-Risk People*

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of World AIDS Day observed December 1, 2013, the North Dakota Department of Health is urging people at risk for HIV/AIDS to get tested, according to Shannon Jahner, HIV Prevention coordinator for the Department of Health.

Established by the World Health Organization in 1988, World AIDS Day serves to further global awareness and focus prevention efforts on the devastating impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Observation of this day provides an opportunity for governments, national AIDS programs, churches, community organizations and individuals to come together to demonstrate commitment and action in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

December 1 serves to remind everyone that the U.S. – like other nations around the world – is deeply affected by this epidemic. Over one million people in the United States are HIV positive, and approximately 50,000 new infections occur every year. Since surveillance began in 1984, more than 600 cases have been reported to the North Dakota Department of Health with approximately 319 individuals currently living with HIV/AIDS in North Dakota. Newly reported cases continue to increase annually in North Dakota and 50 cases have been reported to the state thus far in 2013, which is a significant increase from prior years. It is estimated that about one-fourth of the people likely to be HIV positive are unaware of their infections and infected North Dakotans are no exception. These estimations underscore the need for increased efforts to reach at-risk populations with HIV testing and prevention services.

“World AIDS day is great opportunity to raise awareness about the impact the disease has on people, families and communities,” Jahner said. “If you do not know if you are infected with HIV, you could be spreading it to others. People need to know how to keep themselves from becoming infected with HIV so we can reduce the spread of this disease in our communities. The only way to know if you have HIV is to get tested.”

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

HIV testing is available at test sites throughout the state, and results are available in 20 minutes. The test sites are staffed by trained personnel who offer free and confidential HIV testing, counseling and referrals to those at risk. HIV can be prevented by avoiding or not engaging in risky behaviors, such as unprotected sex, needle-sharing for drug use, or tattooing and body piercing.

For information about HIV testing and other HIV/AIDS services, call the North Dakota Department of Health HIV/AIDS Program hotline at 800.70.NDHIV or visit the program's website at www.ndhealth.gov/hiv. There is also a website where you can identify your risk factors through an anonymous survey at <http://www.ndhealth.gov/knowyourrisk>.

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